

Criteria for categorising Lesser Spotted Woodpecker breeding evidence in the UK

EBCC standard breeding categories	Specific interpretation for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Notes/rationale
Possible breeding		
1. Species observed in breeding season in possible nesting habitats.	One or more birds seen in possible nesting habitat within the same general area between 1 February and 31 July on more than one occasion at least a week apart.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers have large winter ranges (100-300ha) but they focus on a smaller breeding range (30-40ha) in late winter/early spring. ● First displays (calling or drumming) can be heard in March with the peak in April. ● Studies by Ken Smith indicate that birds in suitable habitat between February & July are probably on territory.
2. Singing male(s) present (or breeding calls heard) in breeding season.	Calling or drumming birds.	
Probable breeding		
3. Pair observed in suitable nesting habitat in breeding season.	Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers are rarely seen as pairs. Most records are of drumming or calling individuals.	
4. Permanent territory presumed through registration of territorial behaviour (song <i>etc.</i> on at least two different days a week or more apart at the same place).	One or more birds drumming or calling in possible nesting habitat within the same general area between 1 February and 31 July on more than one occasion at least a week apart.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Birds can call or drum over the whole 30-40ha breeding range. Most activity is in March/April. Once the birds select their nest location they become very inconspicuous and are easily overlooked.
5. Courtship and display.	A pair displaying together at a site constitutes probable breeding.	
6. Visiting probable nest site.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beware of birds exploring old nest cavities early in the season which are not subsequently used.
7. Agitated behaviour or anxiety calls from adults.		
8. Brood patch on adult examined in the hand.		
9. Nest building or excavating nest-hole.	Birds can be conspicuous when excavating their nest cavity in April. Most birds excavate a new cavity each year but they sometimes use the same tree for more than one year. Dead trees or dead branches on live tree preferred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow up excavation sites later in the season (May or early June) to confirm breeding.

Confirmed breeding		
10. Distraction-display or injury-feigning.	Not applicable.	
11. Used nest or eggshells found (occupied or laid within period of survey).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't assume a small excavated hole has been made by a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker without further evidence. Great Spotted Woodpeckers often make initial cavity starts which can appear to be small enough for a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.
12. Recently fledged young (nidicolous species) or downy young (nidifugous species).	Recently fledged should be interpreted as full-sized young or juveniles which are still being fed by a parent.	
13. Adults entering or leaving nest-site in circumstances indicating occupied nest (including high nests or nest-holes, the contents of which can not be seen) or adult seen incubating.	Nests cavities can be high in trees and contents are unlikely to be visible. To qualify as confirmed breeding multiple visits by the adults should be observed.	
14. Adult carrying faecal sac or food for young.	Adults carrying food or faecal sacs in May or June.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adult feeding activity is concentrated within a few ha of the nest site when feeding young in the nest.
15. Nest containing eggs.		
16. Nest with young seen or heard.	Young can often be heard in the nest in the last week before they fledge (late may/early June).	

Notes.

- Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers can be conspicuous in their calling, displays and drumming in March/April but once they are settled on the nest site are difficult to detect. They can call and display over an extensive home range but will settle to nest in a small part of this. Birds excavating a nest cavity are often found in April before the leaves are on the trees. Nests with calling young can turn up in areas where the birds were not detected early in the season. Young can be noisy in the nest in late May/early June.
- This species is largely resident so presence during the winter when they may be more conspicuous can give an indication of sites occupied, but these should be checked in spring as noted above to determine at least Possible breeding.
- Submissions to the Panel: numbers of pairs should be submitted according to the criteria detailed here. Details of all sites should be given unless there are more than ten pairs in the recording area, in which case county totals of the number of pairs breeding in the three categories is acceptable.